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City hopes to rebuild on former plant site

Some 18,700 tons of contaminated debris was removed.

By PETER H. MILLIKEN 8/25/05
VINDICATOR TRIBUNE STAFF

WARREN — City officials hope new economic development can occur on the site of the former Mahoning Power Plant, where the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has just completed a \$2,410,000 cleanup.

"We'd like to get an [environmental] assessment complete before the first of the year," said Mayor Michael O'Brien. "We'll be able to get that land for manufacturing or industrial area so we can market that property," he added.

"This is an expensive venture but, at the same time, the city is actively and aggressively trying to bring this to a conclusion," the mayor said.

"We've completed our removal action," said Mark A. Durno, U.S. EPA on-scene coordinator, at a Wednesday news conference. "We're ready to turn the keys back over to the city so that they can go through future environmental assessments and bring this site closer to redevelopment, which is the ultimate goal," he added.

The \$2,410,000 consists of \$950,000 spent for PCB and mercury cleanup in 2000 and 2001 and \$1,460,000 for this year's effort.

Waste materials extracted

Removed from the site this year were 3,700 tons of PCB-contaminated demolition debris, which was dumped in the Wayne Disposal landfill in Belleville, Mich., and 15,000 tons of asbestos-contaminated debris, dumped at the Minerva Enterprises landfill in Minerva, Ohio. The total disposal cost this year alone was \$984,514, Durno said.

PCBs are polychlorinated biphenyls, which used to be present in electrical equipment.

The plant, built in the early 1900s, operated until the mid-1970s. After demolition of the plant in the late 1990s, the U.S. EPA used federal money for the cleanup. The plant was on the Mahoning River at Summit Street Northwest; the site is now owned by the city.

The city plans to use federal money for the assessment and would like to use those sources and state Clean Ohio funds to fill in the hole in the

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ground with about 25,000 cubic yards of fill material, the mayor said. The mayor said he thinks the seven-acre site can be ready to build on in 18 months.

The U.S. EPA will pursue reimbursement for cleanup costs from past owners and operators of the power plant, Durno said. "We attempted to negotiate a means by which they would conduct a cleanup and pay for it. They declined, so now it will be kicked into an enforcement category," Durno said.

"All of the former owners and operators are still on the hook for this," Durno said. The EPA may sue responsible parties to pay for the cleanup, he added.